SPACE CENTER
Roundup

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Two special girls finally get their day in the sun

April 26 may have been just the start of another week for most people, but for two little girls, it was a red-letter day as they got a chance to do something most people take for granted – go outside and play on a nice sunny day.

The two girls, Amanda Clanton, 9, from Crosby, Texas, and Erica Lumas, 6, from Honduras, both suffer from a rare skin disorder called xeroderma pigmentosum or XP. Since there is no cure, those with the disorder can only curtail it by avoiding UV radiation, staying indoors with sunlight blocked out or by using protective clothing.

April 26 was the first day they were able to play in the sun without risk of getting skin cancer.

The girls and their families met at Space Center Houston with JSC officials along with representatives from the non-profit HED (Hypohidrotic Ectodermal Dysplastia) Foundation and Related Disorders of Hampton, Va., organization, and they each received a special UV protection suit that was developed from space-based technology.

The protective suits include a white jacket, pants, gloves and headgear, including goggles. The external garments protect the children's sensitive skin from more than 99.99 percent of the sun's UV rays. Underneath, the children wear a small cooling support system, necessary because full-body UV suits can get warm. The cooling unit has no moving parts, using 4 gel packs in a vest-like garment. The gel packs can supply cooling for two to four hours and can be recharged in a refrigerator in about 30 minutes.

After the girls received the suits, they put them on and boarded a tram for a short visit to Rocket Park.

The suits have made a huge impact in the lives of those who have used them, enabling them to go outside in daylight for the first time. The HED organization, through an agreement with JSC's Office of Technology Transfer and Commercialization, has begun providing suits to the children who need them. It is estimated that several thousand children around the world suffer from various conditions that cause either sensitivity to light or problems in cooling their bodies.

"This project has been very rewarding to all those involved at JSC," said Robert Dotts, assistant director of the Office of Technology Transfer and Commercialization. "To take technology developed in the Space Program and use it to improve the lives of these children is incredible. In most cases it not only improves their lives, but the lives of their whole family."

"It's amazing to think that because NASA astronauts walk in space and on the moon, children can now play in the sun," said Sarah Moody, the HED Foundation's founder and president. The suits are designed to cost under $2,000 and are now available in various colors. Many families, after years of having to deal with the restrictions of the child's condition, can live more normal lives.

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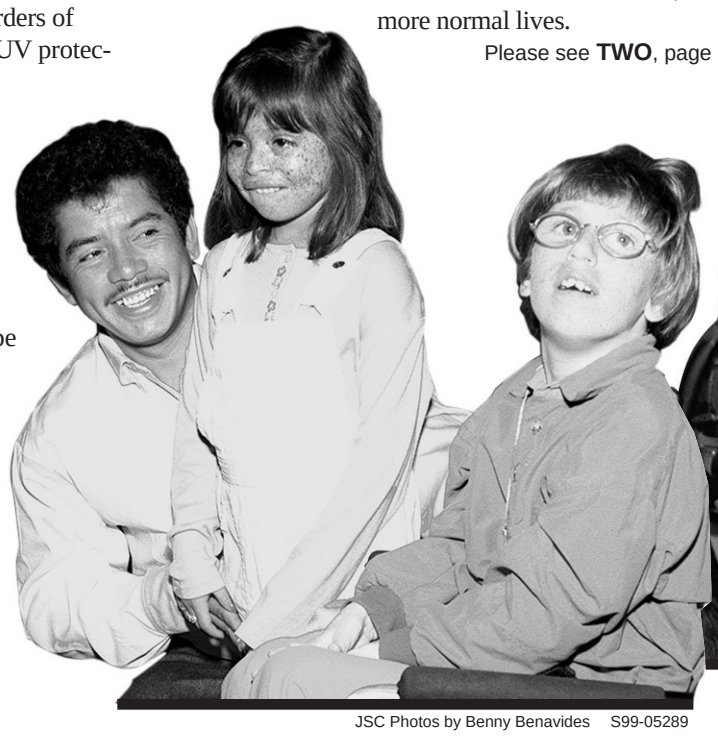

Angie Calloway (far right) stands behind her daughter Amanda Clanton, 9, as she gives Erica Lumas, 6, standing, a hug at Rocket Park. The girls, who suffer from a skin disorder, were enjoying the high-tech NASA spacesuit-based garments that enable them to be outside in daylight. Regoberto Lumas (near right) holds his daughter, Erica, while Amanda Clanton looks on.

JSC Photos by Benny Benavides S99-05289

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Astronaut Winston Scott, left, United Space Alliance employee Marlo Graves and Astronaut Joan Higginbotham welcome Houston Comets' basketball player Monica Lamb to JSC.

JSC hosts first annual Monica Lamb/NASA Science and Basketball Camp

About 100 students from the Houston Independent School District attended their own launch March 18 at JSC. Yes, "their own launch." They built and launched their own rockets. The students participated in the first annual Monica Lamb/NASA Science and Basketball Camp at Texas Southern University, during spring break .

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